

Intelligence bashing

Operation Splinter

Factor

By Stewart Steven

(Hodder, £3.25)

I am not convinced by this book, and since the author provides no evidence to support his story the reviewer does not have to provide any evidence to refute it—though it does, in fact, contain some factual errors. What Mr Steven claims is that the wave of show trials and terror which swept across eastern Europe before Stalin's death was masterminded by Mr Allan Dulles of the CIA, who hoped that it would so discredit the communist regimes that the people would rise up in revolt.

As it turned out, when people did rise up somewhat later they were put down, but there is no evidence that the show trials had much to do with it. Many ordinary people were totally indifferent to whether one lot of communist leaders was put, ting another lot in prison.

Mr. Steven, who was on the *Daily Express* and is now on the *Daily Mail*, admits that the alleged plot did not work but insists that there really was a plot. Its key figure, he says, was Jozef Swiatlo, a deputy head of department in the Polish security police, who defected to the west in 1953. Mr Steven says he was a double

agent from 1949, onwards, and did Mr Dulles's work by systematically feeding Stalin's paranoia about the infiltration of western agents into eastern Europe.

There is no evidence that Swiatlo was a double agent, but even if he was he did not have the power attributed to him, and there were so many other known reasons for the show trials that there was little need for him or for Mr Dulles to add more. Such trials had been a part of the established system in the Soviet Union since well before the war and it was logical to transfer them to eastern Europe along with other aspects of the system. The among, other things, to find scapegoats for economic failures, to resolve rivalries within the communist parties, and to induce an atmosphere of terror and uncertainty. Perhaps the CIA added a little fuel to the flames by sowing additional suspicions here and there but it seems very unlikely that its role, if any, was as crucial as Mr Steven suggests.

If one is going to rewrite history one needs to provide a little evidence. And if one is going to indulge in the fashionable and often justified pastime of bashing the intelligence services one needs to show that one has higher standards.

Richard Davy